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Is *Doctor Who* Australian?

Alan McKee

Abstract

As part of an ARC Discovery project to write a history of Australian television from the point of view of audiences, I looked for Australian television fan communities. It transpired that the most productive communities exist around imported programming like the BBC's *Doctor Who*. This program is an Australian television institution – and I was thus interested in finding out whether it should be included in an audience-centred history of Australian television. Research in archives of fan materials showed that the program has been made distinctively Australian through censorship and scheduling practices. There are uniquely Australian social practices built around it. Also, its very Britishness has become part of its being – in a sense - Australian. Through all of this, there is a clear awareness that this Australian institution originates somewhere else – that for these fans Australia is always secondary, relying on other countries to produce its myths for it, no matter how much it might reshape them.

Is Doctor Who an Australian television program?

Maybe it's not such a good idea to open an academic article with a question that is clearly stupid. Obviously the answer is no. *Doctor Who* is a family science fiction television program produced in Britain, by the British Broadcasting Corporation, made by an almost exclusively British cast and crew. It's a British program.

And yet ...

I'm working on an ARC Discovery grant called 'Australian television and popular memory: new approaches to the cultural history of the media in the project of nation-building' (with John Hartley, Graeme Turner, Sue Turnbull and Chris Healy). The project aims to: 'construct histories of Australian television from the point of view of those who have made and consume it, in order to describe and understand the part that television has played in the popular experience of a national culture'. My own

particular interest is in fan histories of Australian television. I want to know what programs fans have focussed upon, remembered and worked with in order to produce their histories of Australian television. This is only one of the perspectives we are taking. We aim to triangulate information from a number of sources: industrial culture (television's own histories of itself, both broadcast and in the form of biographies and recollections by people involved in its production); material culture (television sets, shooting locations); archival and museum sources; and audience recollections.

Although there is no agreed upon academic definition of what constitutes a fan (Hills, 2002: ix-x), I was interested particularly in television programs that have generated productive communities. The stage in fan studies where fans are seen to be of interest because they are automatically believed to be 'resistant' or to challenge 'dominant ideologies' is long past (Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington, 2002). My interest in fan communities is simply as a complement to the other perspectives in our research project. Fan communities show us not which programs are watched by lots of viewers, or the ones whose names are remembered for long periods, but those which have had a cultural impact to the extent that communities are formed around them. In understanding the 'cultural history' of Australian television and 'the part that television has played in the popular experience of a national culture', this perspective interested me.

And so I asked our research assistant to look for evidence of television programs:

which have generated active fan communities in Australia. I'm happy to interpret this as broadly as possible (eg, producing newsletters, meetings, conventions, screenings, etc). But not just individual iconoclasts who are obsessed with a program.

The parameters were as follows:

I'm not interested in Australians participating on an individual basis in international fan communities (eg, if an Australian posts to an American bulletin board for *Heroes*, that's not relevant). Only if there is a specifically 'Australian' branch of the fan club set up.

Before going on to discuss the results, it is worth discussing the rationale behind this research method. Why was I only interested in the work of fan communities? Why did I explicitly exclude the work of 'individual iconoclasts'?

My work in this project is interested in how fan audiences have remembered Australian television. Audiences are not quite the same thing as viewers. An

‘audience’ isn’t simply the result of the amalgamation of the individual experiences of lots of viewers. Audiences are also ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson, 1983). They have a public existence, and are described by publicly circulated discourses. It’s important not to confuse individual viewers with audience communities. This is precisely what ‘media effects’ research does, with problematic consequences for public discussion about television audiences. Obviously an isolated individual viewer has no power over a national system of television production; but a television audience (a public fiction, imagined community – a discursive construction) has immense power. Such an audience is an important player in the construction of a television system (Hartley, 1992: 116).

And so the research data sought out the publicly circulated productions of fan communities in Australia. Here’s the odd thing. Yes, there exist a small number of Australian fan communities for television programs, both still existing and that have existed over time. *Prisoner* had such a fan community. A small number of people continue to champion *Number 96*. There are short-lived but extremely active online fan communities for reality TV shows like *Big Brother* and *Australian Idol*. But in terms of a productive community of fans that organise around a particular program, producing their own content and social networks around it, there is nothing in Australia to match, for longevity and productivity, the specifically Australian fan community built around the British television program *Doctor Who*¹.

The Australasian *Doctor Who* Fan Club (now the *Doctor Who* Club of Australia) emerged out of a fan protest campaign in 1976 and is still going strong. There are local groups of this club, or other related clubs, in all States of Australia. Dozens of fanzines have been produced by *Doctor Who* fans in Australia. Some are associated with particular groups. *Data Extract* – the newsletter of the ADWFC – started in 1980 and has produced almost 200 issues over a period of around thirty years. Others have produced only a handful of issues before disappearing. Titles include *Zerinza*, *Dark Circus*, *Mistfall*, *Dishrags to Drashigs*, *Pirate Planet*, *South Croydon Listener*, *Sonic Screwdriver*, *Supervoc*, *Chameleon Factor*, *Gallifreyan Graffiti*, *Burnt Toast*, *Necros*, *Data 100*, *Strange Matter*, *Vortex*, *Track of Time*, *Hungryyyy*, *Broadsword*, *Bog Off!*, *Time Brains*, *Australian Whovian Fanzine*, *Slipback*, *Wyrmhole*, *Black Light*, *The Pendulum*, *Katy*, *Ravalox*, *Beacon*, *Scope*, *MiniScope*, *Victorian Time Machine*, *Time Loop*, *Union of Traken* and *Doctor Whom*.

Here is my question. *Doctor Who* is clearly an Australian *institution*. As such, what attention does it deserve in a popular history of Australian television?

Tom O'Regan has noted the 'double face' of Australian television. Unlike the US or (to a lesser degree) the UK, in Australia '[a]udience allegiances attach in equal measure to local and imported programming' (O'Regan, 1993: 59). Australian television does not only consist of Australian programs. *Doctor Who* is an Australian *institution*, an important part of Australian television history - but not an Australian program. Its national identity is not simple in this country.

And it is here that fan cultures become useful for our project – in trying to understand the national identity of a program like this. For fan cultures provide us with an invaluable textual archive, already-existing evidence of how Australian fans make sense of this program. Is national identity important? Without the imposition of a researcher who wants to talk about that issue, is it something these viewers are already thinking about? And if so – in what ways? Does it matter to them that *Doctor Who* isn't Australian? To what extent do they work to turn it into something Australian?

The National Library of Australia holds a substantial, if radically incomplete, archive of *Doctor Who* fanzines. I consulted (incomplete) runs of most of the fanzines that it holds - *Data Extract*, *Sonic Screwdriver*, *Supervoc*, *Chameleon Factor*, *Burnt Toast*, *Strange Matter*, *Track of Time*, *Bog Off* and *Black Light* - looking firstly for material that discussed the national identity of *Doctor Who* explicitly; and secondly for ways in which a distinctive national approach to the program was developed in these publications. Based on this archive, and other sources of information about Australian fan culture, a number of points emerged.

'I could have shown him Brisbane': Australia in the text of Doctor Who

Australia has a privileged relationship with *Doctor Who*. Fans are aware that Australia is the only country outside of the UK that has broadcast every series of the show shortly after its first broadcast in the UK. They are proud of the special status of the country: 'the first repeat of a complete *Doctor Who* story anywhere in the world' was 'Marco Polo' in Australia in December 1965 (Lister, 1992: 3) Indeed, the Australian

Broadcasting Corporation contributed to the cost of making the twentieth anniversary special, *The Five Doctors*.

The fact that Australia is such an important market for the show had a textual impact on the program itself. Producer John Nathan-Turner introduced a central Australian character as a regular companion in its eighteenth to twenty first seasons. Tegan Jovanka was played by Australian actress Janet Fielding. There had been little 'Australian content' in the program before this date (a single story, 1967's 'The Enemy of the World', had been set in Australia but filmed in the UK). By contrast, from 1981-1984, the program literally presented an Australian accent. Beyond the voice of the actress, though, this had little impact on the program. The character said 'Rabbits!' as a swearword, which apparently seemed Australian to the script editor. In a story featuring a guest appearance by a group of Aboriginal dancers, Tegan revealed that (naturally, as an Australian) she could speak to them in 'Aboriginal' ('Four to Doomsday', 1982). The most delightful Australian content comes in the story 'Castrovalva', where the Doctor, suffering from mental distress, is searching for something called a 'zero room':

Tegan: What's a zero room anyway? The Doctor said something about null interfaces.

Nyssa: I suppose some sort of neutral environment. An isolated space cut off from the rest of the universe.

Tegan: He should have told me that's what he wanted. I could have shown him Brisbane.

Australian *Doctor Who* fans have pursued any possible Australian content in the production of the text itself. Articles like 'Australian connections' (Scott, 1995), and the Wikipedia section 'Australian contributions to Doctor Who' trace the work of every creative Australian who has contributed to the program – including writers Anthony Coburn and Bill Strutton, director Lennie Mayne, actors including Kylie Minogue, Gai Waterhouse and Janet Fielding and composers Ron Grainer and Dudley Simpson. And when an Australian fan started writing official *Doctor Who* novels, reviewers commented on their 'Antipodean loyalty' to the writer (McLean, 1994).

'A separate adventure': differences between British and Australian Doctor Who

There is a small element of Australian content in the program itself, but it is minor. However, there is another – more interesting and more important – sense in which the version of *Doctor Who* shown in Australia was distinctively Australian. This is because Australian broadcasting and censorship institutions changed various aspects of the text. This was not done with any nationalistic agenda, to make the program more Australian. But the fact remains that there is an Australian version of *Doctor Who* which is different from the version broadcast in the UK.

The first difference comes through censorship. At many points in the program's history, the broadcaster – the Australian Broadcasting Corporation – demonstrated a more delicate sensibility than the program's creator, the British Broadcasting Corporation. Elements which had been regarded as suitable for British children were unsuitable for those in Australia. The 'Australian Film Censorship Board' required some minor cuts to stories, and the ABC also censored some sequences (Jones, 1991: 4, 5). Australian fans are very interested in writing this history:

The Underwater Menace ... Professor Zaroff's drowning was censored ... Terror of the Autons. The man-eating chair and Mrs Farrel's screams were reduced from the story ... Frontier in Space. Episode one had a hideous face removed ... Planet of the Daleks. The phrase 'I'll kill you if I have to' was censored from part two ... Terror of the Zygons ... Harry threatening Sarah with a pitchfork was removed from part two ... Face of Evil. The cross bow murder from part one was removed ... The Invisible Enemy. Part one had the knifing sequence reduced ... The Sun Makers. Part one had the phrase 'Stuff the company' clipped ... ' (Scott, 1995b: 9-10; see also Lister 1992, Anon, 1990).

And so *Doctor Who* in Australia is less violent – and less narratively coherent – than the British version. As one fan commentator notes, commenting on the cuts made to one story, the British version of *Doctor Who* is in places more 'grim [and] serious' than the Australian version (Anon, 1990b: np).

There is a second important way in which Australian *Doctor Who* is different from British *Doctor Who* – differences in scheduling, which has been very different in Australia and the UK. This has created – as one fan's history of scheduling puts it – 'A separate adventure' (Dunne, 2003. See also Jones, 1991; Lister, 1993; Moore, 1991).

There are two ways in which the Australian scheduling of the program has made the experience of watching the program distinct in this country. Firstly there is the fact

that *Doctor Who* fans in Australia are watching a program which has already been broadcast somewhere else. For example, *Dark Circus* – an official ADWFC publication – states that ‘For the sake of simplicity, DC assumes that British transmissions are “standard” ... when you see a date after a story’s name, it’s the date of the first British transmission of the first episode of the story’ (Orman, 1991: 2). It is clearly a program from somewhere else. And so - particularly in the days before bittorrent – while viewers in the UK watched episodes with few preconceptions, and were often surprised by events that happened in the program, Australian viewers, hearing what had happened from reviews or discussion with UK fans, would often be thoroughly ‘spoiled’, knowing the events of an episode before it was seen. Thus events such as the death of companion Adric at the end of the story ‘Earthshock’, which were surprises to many UK fans, were well known by the time the episodes were actually broadcast in Australia:

The final story of the 1980/81 season – *Logopolis* – has just been recently put to air in Britain. Tom Baker is reported to have given one of his best performances during this series ... In the regeneration scene we shall catch a fleeting glimpse of Peter Davison, who sits up and smiles in the conclusion of the episode (*Sonic Screwdriver* 2(4), May 1981, page 1)²

Australian fans came to programs with preconceptions already in place:

As season 25 was about to appear on the ABC, many questions crossed my mind. What would the season be like? ... Certainly, the comments I had heard from some British fans about the stories were not exactly awe-inspiring (Robinson, 1990: 12)

This also created a particular set of social relations between Australian fans. A fanzine story mentions that: ‘One smug fan who has seen ‘Logopolis’ reports that at one stage a little door was opened in the “real” police box ...’ (*Sonic Screwdriver*, 2(7), Oct-Nov 1981, page 1); while in another, the editor notes that now the story ‘Curse of Fenric’ ‘has been shown on Australian telly ... all of us fanzine editors can admit we’ve seen it and no-one will try to hit me’ (Carroll, 1990: 6).

The second point relating to scheduling was that in Australia, for many years, *Doctor Who* was strip scheduled, with episodes playing at 6.30pm Monday to Thursday throughout the year on a continual loop. This had a couple of effects. Firstly, for some Australian fans (unlike British fans), *Doctor Who* was a continual run of stories, rather than a series of discrete ‘seasons’: ‘For those of you who don’t think in seasons

(and I didn't until recently), the Sylvester McCoy era goes as follows ...' (Carroll, 1990: 6).

But more importantly, the repeats meant that *Doctor Who* was a familiar object in Australia. British fans were treated to very few repeats (Griffiths, 1992), and it's no surprise that they became intensely nostalgic about old stories – they were always 'the good old days', imagined to be better than the stories that were currently airing. By contrast, in Australia, many of the old episodes were just as available as the new ones. When VCRs became commonplace in the late early 80s this meant that many Australian fans could quickly build up their own libraries of their entire series:

Since video recorders became very common in the home – say late 1984 - there has been a repeat showing of every Pertwee episode but one ... two Troughtons, every Tom Baker story, a selection of Peter Davison episodes, Colin Baker's era, and all the Sylvester McCoy stories up to 'The Greatest Show in the Galaxy' (Anon, 1990: 15)

Australian fans have shown an awareness of how this has changed their experience of *Doctor Who*. Familiarity may indeed breed contempt.

I was watching them [stories on VCR]. And watching them. And watching them. Awful things started to happen. Before I knew it, I was repeating every line. I started hating stories I used to like. Every story had something wrong with it. It is quite clear that *Doctor Who* was never meant to be watched more than a few times ... It was just designed that way for budget reasons ... If you're about to buy a video [recorder]... Just be very careful how many times you watch a story, no matter how much you like it ... when you sit down to watch 'The Curse of Fenric' for the eleventh time and somehow just can't sit through it, don't erase the tape in despair. It isn't the story's fault. It's yours (Moore, 1990: 14)

Doctor Who parties

Jonathan Gray has recently insisted of the importance of intertextuality in understanding how culture works (Gray, 2006). Hopefully this article has made clear that it doesn't make sense, in talking about the national identity of a television program like *Doctor Who*, to insist on 'the text itself' when making such determinations. This is even clearer when we come to fan cultures. The Wikipedia article '*Doctor Who* in Australia' describes not only broadcasts of the program, but also the fan culture which has grown up around it. There is a distinct 'History of

Doctor Who in Australia' (Jones, 1991: 4-5), consisting not only of the differing classification of stories and screening dates, but also the formation and disbanding of various Doctor Who fan clubs:

On August 24th 1976 a group of fans gathered outside the ABC headquarters in Elizabeth Street, Sydney and demonstrated about the decision not to buy new episodes of Doctor Who. From this gathering emerged the Australasian *Doctor Who* Fan Club (Jones, 1986: 1)

As other writers on fan cultures have made clear, the cult programs at the centre of fan communities serve as pretexts around which other practices are built (eg, Jenkins, 1992). *Doctor Who* fandom in Australia is very real. It has created communities where Australian television viewers have engaged in social and cultural practices. We can write – and fans do write – a history of '*Doctor Who* in Australia' where the text of the program itself features only incidentally. This is distinctive national culture: and one way in which we can point to an Australian version of *Doctor Who*.

For example, there is a long tradition in Australian *Doctor Who* fandom of organising not 'conventions' (as meetings of fans are traditionally called), but 'parties'.

Sometimes these featured visiting guests from the program; but this was not always the case (*Australasian Doctor Who Newsletter* no 7, Sept 1981, page 2; *Australasian Doctor Who Newsletter* number 19, March 1983, page 1; *Australasian Doctor Who Newsletter* number 20, April/May 1983, page 1; *Australasian Doctor Who Newsletter* number 20, April/May 1983, page 1; *Australasian Doctor Who Newsletter* number 21, June 1983, page 1; *Data Extract*, number 29, June 1984, page 1; *Data Extract* number 42, Jan/Feb 1986, page 1; *Australasian Doctor Who Newsletter* number 4, April 1981, page 2; Harland, 1990). The accounts of these parties published in the fanzines give a fascinating sense of a very ordinary community: 'Found at the JNT meeting a house key and a light brown cardigan' (*Data Extract* number 29, June 1984, page 2):

The September meeting of the Victorian Doctor Who Fan Club will take place on Sept. 26th at the residence of Linda Wong, 65-69 Meville Rd Pascoe Vale Sth. Please enter by the back door from 1pm onwards (*Australasian Doctor Who Newsletter* no 7, Sept 1981, page 1)

The social nature of these events is important: 'For a long time ... fan clubs were little more than groups of friends having fun together' (Moore, 1993: 8). There are hints in the fanzines about how important these social events were to fans:

Living outside of Sydney with very little contact with other members, we greatly appreciated the chance to get together with other fans ... how could we be a fan club without at least semi-regular meetings? (Plummer, 1993: 14)

And mentions of the tyranny of distance suggest an Australian element in the make-up of these social networks that is less true in a country as small as the UK:

Fans in the city (Sydney that is) have everything. They can go to the ADWFC Parties and the occasional convention, get hold of merchandise relatively easily and find other fans to talk to about the program. A country fan can do none of these things ... (McInnes, 1991: 14)

As mentioned above, these parties often revolved around *Doctor Who* stars making visits to Australia. In this respect, Katy Manning is interesting. The actress played the companion Jo to Jon Pertwee's Doctor from 1971-1973. Jo is fondly remembered, often listed alongside Sarah Jane as one of the favourite companions of the classic series. But in Australia, her role in the show is much more pronounced. Manning is the only major actor from the series who currently lives in Australia – with her husband Barry Crocker. (Yes, *the* Barry Crocker). As such, she has taken on a major role in Australian Doctor Who fandom. She regularly appears at *Doctor Who* parties; fans are kept up to date about her theatre work (commonly appearing in farces at suburban theatres); and she has been the official patron of the Australasian *Doctor Who* Fan Club (*Data Extract* number 133, Jan/Feb 1998, page 2). On the club's tenth anniversary, the newsletter printed a congratulatory note from her. In Australian *Doctor Who*, Jo is not a minor character – she is a central one:

Katy Manning who is living in Australia has passed on to DE information on her current activities and plans for the near future. She is presently commuting to Melbourne to work on the film *Son of Alvin Purple* in which she plays a suburban Joan Collins (*Data Extract* number 29, June 1984, page 2)

There are other ways in which Australian *Doctor Who* fan culture has distinctive elements. For example, fanzines provide details of the distribution of *Doctor Who* content in the country – both broadcasting of programs and availability of merchandise (*Australasian Doctor Who Newsletter* number 11, March 1982, p1; *Data*

Extract number 42, Jan/Feb 1986, page 1). There is also a distinctive relationship between Australian *Doctor Who* fans and their broadcaster. They are involved in a direct relationship with the ABC campaigning for more repeats – something that British fans rarely did:

If you want the ABC to repeat old *Doctor Who* stories from the BBC archive it is ENTIRELY up to YOU, the Fan Club can do nothing at all ... it is VERY important that YOU write NOW TODAY to the ABC Head Office ... (*Australasian Doctor Who Newsletter* number 20, April/May 1983, page 1; see also Stallion, 1983: 4)

It is also interesting to note that in these exhortations to write, the fanzines insist: ‘Do NOT mention that you are a member of the fan club or use the word FAN. Instead you are a viewer, are a watcher, enjoy watching the show, etc’ (*Data Extract*, number 95, Sept 1992, insert; see also *Data Extract* number 42, Jan/Feb 1986, page 1).

It must be emphasised that in many other ways, Australian *Doctor Who* fandom is identical to the British version. Much of the content in the fanzines is generic – reviews of television episodes and offshoot merchandising (eg, *Black Light*). Just as British *Doctor Who* fans in the mid 80s started a hate campaign against John Nathan Turner, the producer at the time, so Australian fans at the time were proclaiming that he had killed the program and demanding that he be removed from the production (Jones, 1991: 4). And moments where Australian social events are brought into the fan culture of *Doctor Who* are extremely rare:

It’s been fascinating during the ‘debate’ over the High Court’s Mabo decision to watch the racists crawling out of the woodwork ... the same pattern is emerging in some of the criticism of the [*Doctor Who*] New Adventures (Anon, 1993: 12)

‘Mr Spielberg wouldn’t know what Englishness was if it jumped up and bit him on the derriere’

There is one final element in relation to the program’s national identity in Australia that is of some interest. Previous research has noted that British fans use the program’s ‘Britishness’ as a way to describe what is good about it (McKee, 2001). As I discuss in another context, fans understand Britishness to mean a focus on character and story rather than visual pleasure. This is set in opposite to an imagined ‘Americanness’ which is characterised in terms of an expensive, special effects-driven

visual aesthetic. This binary is then mapped onto a series of judgements about culture – deep versus superficial; complex versus simplistic, and so on (Tulloch, 1995: 115):

The fact that *Doctor Who* was cruder visually than flashy American series or big-budget cinema films is fantastically irrelevant. The programme's success has not been built on special effects, but on solid storytelling (Gray, quoted in McKee, 2001: np)

It turns out that this is also true of Australian *Doctor Who* fans (Tulloch, 1995: 121, 122). Indeed, there is a sense in which the program's Britishness is a part of what makes it Australian. In 1996 it was announced that an American network would be producing a pilot for a new series; and that Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment was involved. Australian fans employed discourses in national identity in their responses to this news:

Mr Spielberg wouldn't know what Englishness was if it jumped up and bit him on the derriere. Do you seriously expect us to believe that the producer of most of history's highest grossing blockbuster movies – American movies – is going to settle for such things as shimmering pieces of tin foil as malicious alien monsters, and plastic detergent bottles as their high-tech sophisticated spacecraft? These things, combined with the gravel pit alien landscapes and cardboard studio sets, were what the 'original spirit of *Doctor Who*' was all about. We didn't love it for the mind-boggling special FX ... No, the reason why *Doctor Who* was such a great piece of escapism was that it was so implausible yet still original and imaginative (Boots, 1994: 4; see also Shaw, 1994: 3)

Indeed, there is a nice twist in the fact that *Doctor Who* has always been broadcast on the ABC. Putatively, ABC stands for the 'Australian Broadcasting Corporation'. But an examination of the provenance of its programming makes clear that it could more accurately be described as the 'not-American' Broadcasting Corporation. Much British material is broadcast on this national broadcaster – including commercial soap operas (like *The Bill*) which would be rejected out of hand for consideration were they produced by Americans. And so it seems that the Britishness of *Doctor Who* makes it 'Australian' in the sense that it is suitable for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Australianness or fanness?

As I noted at the start of this article, our ARC project aims to: ‘construct histories of Australian television from the point of view of those who have made and consume it, in order to describe and understand the part that television has played in the popular experience of a national culture’.

From this perspective, a study of fan cultures in Australia draws our attention to the fact that overseas programs may play a central role in such a history. And this raises the question – how do those programs contribute to a popular experience of a national culture? In this article I have suggested some ways in which this might happen. The programs might be reconstructed as something distinctively Australian through censorship and scheduling practices. There may be uniquely Australian social practices built around them. Their Britishness may become part of their Australianness. And through all of this, there is a clear awareness that this Australian institution originates somewhere else – that Australia is always secondary, relying on other countries to produce its myths for it, no matter how much it might reshape them. Of course in making these claims I have to draw attention to the limitations of this research method. Two key issues stand out.

The first is that although the amount of material which is produced by fans is massive, studying this archive makes clear the distance between fan experience and that of wider audiences. As noted above, only a few hundred fans attend the parties and conventions, and there were around a thousand self-identified fans around the country at any given time (Orman, 1990: 1). This can be compared with hundreds of thousands of viewers of the program in Australia, and millions of television viewers generally. And the insistence by fanzine editors that when readers engage in writing campaigns to television stations that they should never identify themselves as ‘fans’, but only as a ‘viewer ... a watcher, enjoy watching the show, etc’ makes clear the distance between fans and other viewers. A fascinating article in *Data Extract* surveys non-fans for their memories of *Doctor Who*. These interviewees are revealed as viewers – they are familiar with the basics of the program and have seen some episodes – but the distance between their familiarity with the program and that of the fans is immense. For example, when asked about the stories they remember, fans would be able to give you title, date of broadcast, production code, writer and director. By contrast, viewers say things like: ‘There was one where they were transported somewhere, I don’t know what it was, but the people that the Doctor was

fighting got transformed into stone'; or 'Some sort of swamp planet and the half-men half-horse people' (Moore, Griffiths, and Yee, 1993: 13). Viewers are not fans. We must always bear that in mind. And yet, with that caveat in place, this archive reveals fascinating information that allows us to say that yes, in a way, *Doctor Who* is an Australian program. And answering that question allows us to think about the national identity of television programming in an interesting new way.

Secondly, as noted above, I explicitly looked for particular kinds of audience activity – organised fan community production. I have explained above why I was interested in such work – but it is worth noting that decision has an impact on the kinds of data that my research uncovered. When we draw up a list of the television programs which have prompted this kind of fan activity over the history of television, certain genres predominate: *Star Trek*; *Doctor Who*; *Stargate*; *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* ... the programs which invite organised fan community activity seem to be those in the science fiction and fantasy genres. And so it may be that my research method points to another aspect of Australian television history. Perhaps it's difficult to find productive fan communities for Australian-produced television programs because Australian television has made little in the way of science fiction or fantasy programming. I suggest two reasons for this. Firstly, with their use of prosthetics and visual effects, science fiction and fantasy are expensive genres; Australian television is made much more cheaply than its British or American counterparts. And secondly, science fiction and fantasy programs tend to attract niche rather than mainstream audiences (the recent mainstream success in Britain of *Doctor Who* is an exception to this rule). Australian television still tends to work in the business model described by industry analysts as 'TV I' – driven by the attempt to gather the largest possible audience, regardless of its demographic makeup (Reeves, Rodgers and Epstein, 1996: 24). By contrast, American television has moved to a 'TV II' model (exemplified by subscription channels like HBO) where the brute size of the audience is less important than the share of attractive niche demographics in that audience. Young audiences and educated audiences are both attractive niche demographics – and both are more interested in science fiction and fantasy than are the wider population.

It may be that what my research ultimately reveals is that Australian television has not produced programs in the correct genres to invite organised fan community activity – another insight into the history of Australian television as it is seen by its audiences.

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¹ The question of when a television viewer becomes ‘productive’ is not an easy one to answer. Obviously producing a fanzine is productive – but what about an online posting? Or a conversation with a friend about a program? Or making an interpretation of it? I have discussed these questions in detail elsewhere (McKee, 2004). In this instance, I am more interested in the pragmatic question – have they produced material that is available to a researcher as an archive?

² Where referencing newsletter stories that have no author or title, I have given the full details in text.